



## **ALASKAN WAY VIADUCT AND SEAWALL PROJECT COMMENT SUMMARY July 2002**

### **Introduction**

The Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Project database contains 2,158 comments, 218 of which were submitted between July 1 and August 5, 2002.

### **Origin of Comments**

The open houses held in late July yielded 137 comments. This figure includes 59 comments from comment forms available at the open houses, 58 comments recorded on flipcharts, and 20 comments recorded on write-on maps of the project area. Seventy nine comments were received through the project website as email messages or forms completed online and 2 comments came in via comment cards left at information displays located in the community.

The bulk of the July comments, 117, came from outside the immediate project area. Another 40 comments were received from the north area of the project, 33 comments came from the south area of the project, and 17 from the central area. The origin of the remaining 11 comments could not be determined.

### **Design Issues**

The comment form, both the paper version as well as the form currently available online, features a section where commenters can rate 22 design issues on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating a low level of concern and 5 indicating the highest level. Forty-five commenters elected to provide feedback on these options during the July comment period. The six most important issues identified are as follows:

- **Transit** (rated as a 4 or 5 in importance by **37** respondents)
- **Seismic Safety** (rated as a 4 or 5 in importance by **34** respondents)
- **Pedestrian Access** (rated as a 4 or 5 in importance by **32** respondents)
- **Cost of Plans** (rated as a 4 or 5 in importance by **29** respondents)
- **Connections/Circulation** (rated as a 4 or 5 in importance by **28** respondents)
- **Historic Buildings** (rated as a 4 or 5 in importance by **28** respondents)



## Comment Categories

The four general categories that received the most comments are the following:

### *Cost* .....85

There seems to be a general consensus that the numbers released on the estimated project costs for all three plans, particularly the tunnel plan, are too high. Despite that fact, many still chose the tunnel option as their preferred solution. Commenters making this choice stated that the cost was great but that the long-term benefits made the investment worth making. There was also a large group of people who thought that the choice of a preferred alternative should be made based on cost and opted to support the aerial or rebuild plans. Most people are still opposed to the idea of developing the land as a means to generate revenue. The fear that the land will not be used for the public good or open space still exists.

“The tunnel is the worst kind of money pit - your 11 billion estimate is likely far too low.”

“We should do this project right, whatever it costs and that means the tunnel. No city in their right mind would build an elevated structure along their waterfront.”

### *Connections/Circulation* .....80

Many commenters are concerned about how traffic is going to be dealt with during construction of any of the proposed plans. People want to know how their daily commutes will be adversely affected. On the flip side, commenters are also largely supportive of reconnecting the street grid in South Lake Union and trying to fix the Mercer St. “mess.” Some people are concerned about the current capacity and think that this would be a good time to increase it, while others are concerned about ensuring that we maintain an effective alternative to I-5 and bypass to the downtown area.

“My main concern is if, and how long north/south traffic will be rerouted to I-5 during viaduct reconstruction. If viaduct traffic were to be halted on the viaduct for even one month, the result for commuters on Interstate 5 would be devastating.”

“I love the idea of re-establishing grids wherever possible.”



*Visual Quality* ..... 71

More than half of the people who commented in some way on the visual quality of the viaduct were in favor of the tunnel option. They want to see the elimination of the “concrete scar” that separates downtown from the waterfront. They also note the benefits of reduced surface traffic and noise and increased green space. There are also many people who think just the opposite and support either the rebuild or aerial plans. Many commenters continue to believe that if the viaduct structure is eliminated so will the publicly accessible views. There is also a fear among those who would like to see the aerial structure remain, that the land will be sold to developers and the general public will not benefit from its removal.

“A raised viaduct is a scar across the face of Seattle, put it underground.”

“The viaduct is a ribbon of changing views that can be enjoyed by everyone for free.”

*Urban Design* ..... 47

Most commenters who spoke to the urban design aspect of the project did so in support of reconnecting the downtown area to the waterfront. They recognize the fact that it will cost more money but think that eliminating the “eyesore” of the aerial structure, creating more open space, and improving the livability of the city are all worth the investment. Many of those who oppose the tunnel option are not averse to the idea of creating more open space, however they do not have faith that will actually happen once the structure is eliminated as well as they do not believe a comparable view will be created.

“I applaud the decision to support the cut and cover tunnel option for the viaduct. Reclaiming the waterfront is very appealing to me.”

The majority of the commenters chose not to indicate their weekly usage of the viaduct, or whether they used the viaduct to access or bypass downtown Seattle.

“I am a home owner in West Seattle, a grandmother, and an urban planner. Much as I, as many, love the view from the viaduct, it must not be allowed to remain, in any form. Not only should it be undergrounded to take advantage of the waterfront, but the resulting land must remain in the public domain.”